

## Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 PORT M 00447 030345Z  
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
/066 W

-----082799 030350Z /65

R 300050Z MAR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3158  
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA  
CINCPAC HONOLULU

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT MORESBY 0447

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PP  
SUBJECT: NEW OPPOSITION LEADER

REFS: A) PORT MORESBY 411 (NOTAL), B) STATE 078865

1. SUMMARY: FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUNDER ON IAMBAKEY OKUK, WHO IS EXPECTED TO BECOME LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WHEN PARLIAMENT NEXT MEETS ON MAY 22. OKUK IS AN UNPREDICTABLE POLITICAL OPPORTUNIST, RATHER THAN AN IDEOLOGUE, WHOSE INTERESTS CENTER ON DOMESTIC, NOT FOREIGN AFFAIRS. UNDER OKUK, WITH SIR JOHN GUISE AS HIS DEPUTY, THE OPPOSITION IS EXPECTED TO BE BOTH MORE CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND MORE EFFECTIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. IAMBAKEY OKUK, WHO HAS TAKEN OVER DE FACTO LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT (REFTEL A), HAS HAD A CHECKERED POLITICAL CAREER. FOLLOWING HIS ELECTION TO THE HOUSE  
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 PORT M 00447 030345Z

OF ASSEMBLY IN 1972, HE SERVED AS MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (72-74), MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT (74-75) AND MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (75-76). HE WAS SUMMARILY DISMISSED BY PM SOMARE EARLY IN 1976 WHEN HE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT A BROAD COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD LEAD TO DICTATORSHIP. SOMARE REPORTEDLY HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR EXCUSES TO FIRE OKUK BECAUSE OF ALLEGATIONS OF OKUK'S CORRUPTION. DURING THAT PERIOD HE WAS DEPUTY LEADER OF THE NOW DEFUNCT NATIONAL PARTY. HE

WAS RE-ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT IN 1977 AS AN INDEPENDENT, ALLIED HIMSELF WITH THE OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY AND BECAME ITS SHADOW MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT. HOWEVER, AS HE DID IN THE GOVERNMENT PREVIOUSLY, OKUK BECAME INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF HIS POLITICAL ALLIES AND FINALLY BROKE WITH UP AND TOOK ALONG ENOUGH MEMBERS TO DEPRIVE UP OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE OPPOSITION.

3. ALTHOUGH SHOWING SIGNS OF INSTABILITY AND UNPREDICTABILITY, OKUK COMES ACROSS AS AN AMBITIOUS, CAPABLE POLITICAL OPPORTUNIST WHO HAS PLAYED POLITICAL MUSICAL CHAIRS TO BECOME LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, A POSITION WHICH HE WILL USE TO HARRASS PM SOMARE AND TRANSPORT MINISTER JEPHCOTT FOR WHOM HE HAS A SPECIAL DISLIKE.

4. WITH RESPECT TO REFTTEL B, EMBASSY HAD HELD UP THIS CABLE IN ORDER TO GET BETTER LINE ON OKUK BUT WHEN PARLIAMENT CLOSED ON THE 22ND, MEMBERS IMMEDIATELY HEADED HOME FOR LONG EASTER HOLIDAY. HOWEVER, WE HAVE GONE THROUGH HANSARDS OF ALL 1977-78 PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS AND FOUND NO OCCASION ON WHICH OKUK SPOKE ON ANY FOREIGN AFFAIRS QUESTION. HIS PARLIAMENTARY INTERVENTIONS DEALT PRIMARILY WITH THREE MATTERS, HIGHLANDS (HE IS A CHIMBU) AGRICULTURE, ATTACKS ON TRANSPORT MINISTER JEPHCOTT AND HECKLING THE GOVERNMENT ON PROCEDURAL MATTERS. MOST HIGHLANDERS ARE PROVINCIAL AND CONCENTRATE ON DOMESTIC ISSUES. OKUK IS NO EXCEPTION. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 PORT M 00447 030345Z

5. AN EMBOFF SPOKE WITH FORMER GOVERNOR GENERAL SIR JOHN GUISE, A SKILLED PARLIAMENTARIAN ON MARCH 28. QUESTIONED ABOUT OPPOSITION INPUT IN FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS, GUISE SAID IT WAS MINIMAL BECAUSE THERE HAD NOT BEEN AN EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION, IMPLYING THAT THE NEW OPPOSITION WOULD RECTIFY THAT SITUATION. WITH RESPECT TO TORRES STRAIT, FEW PAPUA NEW GUINEANS WOULD QUESTION FONMIN OLEWALE'S DEDICATION TO A SETTLEMENT FULLY ACCEPTABLE TO PNG OR THE PEOPLE OF THAT AREA, WHICH IS HIS HOME. THE OPPOSITION COULD WELL EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT FROM TIME TO TIME ON IRIAN JAYA BECAUSE PEOPLE HERE TEND TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THEIR FELLOW NEW GUINEANS ACROSS THE BORDER. HOWEVER, THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS REALIZE THAT POPULAR FEELINGS NOTWITHSTANDING, PNG MUST MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH INDONESIA - AND THAT MEANS A CORRECT POSITION WITH RESPECT TO IRIANESE DISSIDENTS.

6. FURTHER PERSONAL DATA ON OKUK FOLLOW:

- A) BORN 1943 IN PARI VILLAGE, CHIMBU DISTRICT
- B) MARRIED, THREE CHILDREN
- C) EDUCATION, THREE YEARS SECONDARY SCHOOL AND TWO YEARS

AUTO MECHANICS APPRENTICESHIP

D) RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION - LUTHERAN

E) LANGUAGES - ENGLISH, PIDGIN, HAGEN AND KUMEN

F) FOREIGN TRAVEL - EXTENSIVE, INCLUDING VISIT TO U.S.  
IN 1975 AND 1977.

OLMSTED

NOTE BY OC/T: MESSAGE DELAYED IN TRANSMISSION.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, POLITICAL LEADERS, OPPOSITION PARTIES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 30 mar 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978PORTM00447  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780143-0316  
**Format:** TEL  
**From:** PORT MORESBY  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1978/newtext/t1978036/aaaaaeof.tel  
**Line Count:** 123  
**Litigation Code IDs:**  
**Litigation Codes:**  
**Litigation History:**  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Message ID:** d8e3a1c5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 78 PORT MORESBY 411, 78 STATE 78865  
**Retention:** 0  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 06 may 2005  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**SAS ID:** 3304897  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** NEW OPPOSITION LEADER  
**TAGS:** PGOV, PINT, PINR, PP, (OKUK, IAMBAKEY)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**vdkgvwkey:** odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS\_Docs/d8e3a1c5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc  
**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014